

Message Text

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ORIGIN HA-05

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TO AMCONSUL HONG KONG NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT: VIETNAMESE REFUGEES ON AMERICAN MOHAWK

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REF: (A) HONG KONG 12327; (B) CUSHING/KREUSER TELECON,
9/6/78; (C) STATE 224908

FOR SHOESMITH FROM DERIAN AND HOLBROOKE

1. WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR PERSONAL INTERVENTION IN
REPRESENTATIONS TO HKG TO ATTEMPT REVERSAL OF ITS
POSITION ON REFUGEES REPORTED REF A.

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2. WE FULLY UNDERSTAND HKG'S RELUCTANCE TO SET PRE-
CEDENT FOR DIVERSION OF SHIPS ASSISTING REFUGEES TO HK
BUT BELIEVE THAT USG'S DECISION TO PROVIDE GUARANTEE OF
RESETTLEMENT TO US WITHIN 30 DAYS (REF B) PROVIDES HKG
GROUNDS ON WHICH TO MAKE EXCEPTION THIS CASE. US GUARAN-
TEE OF QUICK ONWARD MOVEMENT OF THESE REFUGEES TO U.S.-
SHOULD TIP BALANCE IN FAVOR OF ALLOWING REFUGEES ASHORE

EVEN IF ONLY UNDER HEADING OF TEMPORARY TRANSIT.

3. IF USEFUL, YOU MAY WISH TO REFER TO US ACTION IN GUARANTEEING RESETTLEMENT TO REFUGEES ABOARD LIBERIAN-REGISTERED HK-OWNED WORLD KINGDOM AS EXCEPTION TO U.S. POLICY FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS.

4. MOHAWK CASE ATTRACTING WIDE NOTICE AND US LINES SEEKING ASSISTANCE AT HIGHEST POSSIBLE LEVELS IN USG. MOREOVER, WE EXPECT THAT THERE WILL BE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY VERY HEAVY PUBLICITY WHICH WILL PUT UKG, HONG KONG AUTHORITIES, AND UNHCR IN MOST UNFAVORABLE LIGHT.

5. IN EFFECT, THE RESULT OF THEIR COMBINED ACTIONS (OR INACTION) TO DATE HAS BEEN TO SEVERELY PENALIZE A SHIP FOR THE HUMANITARIAN GESTURE, TO CREATE A SITUATION IN WHICH THE ADDITIONAL EXPENSES WILL BE MUCH GREATER THAN THOSE INCURRED TO DATE, AND TO IGNORE EXPLICIT USG GUARANTEES. THE SAFETY FACTOR IS SUCH THAT, EVEN WITH THE ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT WHICH HONG KONG IS REQUIRING MOHAWK TO PURCHASE, SAFE PASSAGE TO BANGKOK CAN NOT BE ASSURED BECAUSE OF THE SHIPS' CONFIGURATION, THE WEATHER, AND THE LARGE NUMBER OF REFUGEES. HMG, HONG KONG AUTHORITIES AND UNHCR SHOULD ALL RECOGNIZE THAT THIS WILL HAVE A VERY NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THEIR IMAGE IN UNITED STATES.

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6. AT SAME TIME YOU MAY INFORM HKG THAT WE ARE MAKING SIMILAR REPRESENTATIONS TO BRITISH EMBASSY HERE AND HAVE REQUESTED AMEMBASSY LONDON TO DO SO ALSO (REF C).

7. FOR LONDON: WOULD APPRECIATE REPORT ON YOUR APPROACH TO UKG IN SUPPORT OF THIS REPRESENTATION TO HKG. CHRISTOPHER

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